CANDID STATEMENT

OF

FACTS,

RELATIVE TO THE CONCERT,

WHICH WAS HELD IN

Phila. **GRACE CHURCH,**

December 21st, 1835.

STATEMENT OF FACTS.

Every individual of ordinary sensibility, and more especially every sincere Christian, must deeply deplore the occurrence of any serious misunderstanding between a minister and a portion of his congregation, however insignificant that portion may be. And it is, confessedly, the duty of those who are anxious to promote the extension of the Gospel, sedulously to avoid the commission of any act that may have a tendency to produce an alienation of that kind feeling and affectionate intercourse, which should ever subsist between a Rector and his people. Much patience and christian forbearance should, therefore, be exercised by both. This is more particularly necessary, when suffering under the infliction of real or imaginary injuries. Occasionally, however, it becomes a question of prayerful consideration, and requiring no little difficulty in arriving at its correct solution, whether we ought silently to encourage misrepresentation, when, by a calm and temperate statement of facts, we have it in our power to place the matter in a true light. The difficulty and responsibility of the case are immeasurably increased, if these misrepresentations are operating injuriously on ourselves, and the facts necessary to establish our innocence cannot be brought forward without having an injurious effect on others.

Such is precisely the position in which we have been placed, by the circulation of misrepresentations in reference to the Concert which was given in Grace Church in December last; and which are calculated in no small degree, to injure us in the estimation of a Christian community. The course, therefore, we are now about to take in relation to that matter, has not proceeded from a hasty or sudden impulse; it is the result of calm and mature deliberation. We have most anxiously desired to

avoid it; but a sense of duty would not permit us to shrink from the undertaking, however unpleasant to us its execution may be. Conscious of our own rectitude, we were willing to suffer wrongfully, while entrusted with the management of the temporal concerns of the Church, rather than give publicity, at that time, to a statement of facts, which, we were apprehensive, would place our Rector in an unfavourable point of view, and possibly sever his pastoral connection with the church; at any rate, our motives might have been misconstrued, and the facts would not then have received from the congregation a calm and dispassionate consideration. Nor would we, even now, without unfeigned regret, and in vindication of a reputation dear to us, do any thing in the slightest degree calculated to injure the Rector or impair his usefulness; although we have for some time been aware that he was permitting, if not authorizing, his influence to be used to our disparagement. Had his friends endeavoured to exonerate him from any improper conduct in relation to the affair of the Concert, without attempting to implicate the Vestry by giving currency to reports eminently calculated to throw unmerited odium on them; we should have been spared the painful necessity of saying anything in our own justification. Even after these reports were put in circulation, we long consoled ourselves with the belief, that the public would probably consider them as fabrications promulged for the special purpose of operating on the recent election; and consequently that they would not be credited by any but the weak and credulous. In this opinion, consolatory as it was, we have been painfully disappointed. Our daily intercourse with society has fully satisfied us, that there is a deep and growing impression pervading the community, that the Rector was opposed to the Concert, and was forced

by his Vestry to acquiesce in the measure, against his own conviction of its impropriety.

A concise history of the circumstances connected with that transaction will show whether or not this impression is justified by the facts of the case.

At a meeting of the Vestry, held on the 24th day of July, 1835, a committee was appointed to make the necessary arrangements for a public concert, the proceeds of which were to be appropriated towards aiding in the payment for the new organ. This committee, after consulting with the superintendents of the musical department, had several interviews with Mr. B. Cross. The result of these consultations and interviews was a conviction of the expediency of securing the services of Miss Watson, an eminent opera singer. It was ascertained, that the expenses of the concert, if conducted in accordance with the views of the committee and those whom they consulted, would amount at least to five hundred dollars. And although the committee were clothed with plenary powers, they declined taking the responsibility of the arrangements. They therefore would not commit themselves by making any engagements, until they had again fully and unequivocally received the approbation of the Vestry. In coming to this determination, they were influenced mainly by a persuasion, that, if the arrangements were not entered into with entire unanimity, an effort might subsequently be made to embarrass the undertaking, by those who had previously, in other ways, and on other occasions, manifested their opposition to the founders of the church. Instead, therefore, of engaging Miss Watson or any one else, they laid before the Vestry a written communication from Mr. B. Cross, detailing his and their views of the manner in which the concert ought to be conducted, and the engagements that ought to be made. This was accompanied by a verbal report,

in which it was most distinctly and explicitly stated, by one of the committee, that the concert, if got up in accordance with their views, would be much more expensive than was at first anticipated; and therefore, unless the Rector and Vestry resolved to enter into it warmly and zealously, and with a determination to make it succeed, we had better abandon it altogether, or conduct it on a more humble scale. The Rector being present, expressed his approbation of the plan suggested by the committee—manifested a warm interest in the concert, and pledged himself to do every thing in his power to promote its success. The other members of the Vestry gave an assurance, equally satisfactory, of their decided co-operation. Not a single individual objected to any part of the proposed arrangements; although it was frankly and openly stated that Miss Watson was a professional opera singer of considerable celebrity, and was an especial favourite with the Philadelphians. The slightest suspicion of the impropriety of engaging such an individual to take part in the concert did, not once cross our minds. We were persuaded, that the heavy expense requisite to secure Miss Watson's services would be more than counterbalanced by a greatly increased demand for tickets, and a consciousness of adding to the enjoyment and happiness of those, whose kindness and liberality might induce them to contribute to the praise-worthy object which the concert was designed to accomplish. The arrangements were, therefore, entered into with the unanimous consent of the *Rector*, Wardens, and Vestry. And in no respect were these arrangements afterwards altered, excepting by subsequently engaging Signor Fabj, of which engagement, the Rector was informed by the committee, on the very evening it was made, and they parted with him fully impressed with the belief that it had met with his decided approbation.

In compliance with his promise, the Rector immediately engaged heartily in the cause; or at any rate, acted in such a way as to lead us and others to believe that his co-operation was sincere, as well as efficient. Few of us were more successful in the sale of tickets than the Rector; and few of us evinced a greater apparent anxiety that our brightest anticipations of success should be completely realized. Had he not sanctioned the concert in the outset, it would never have been undertaken. Had he opposed it, on a more mature examination of the subject, it would instantly have been abandoned. Had he objected to the engagement of an actress or opera singer, such engagement would not have been made. Had he been apprized of the fact of Miss Watson being an actress, only on the morning of the concert: and had he, even at that late period, informed the Vestry that he was conscientiously opposed to the employment of an actress; after calmly reasoning the matter with him, and failing to convince him of its propriety, we would, most cheerfully, have paid Miss Watson the full amount she was to have received, and in as courteous a manner as possible, dispensed with her services. We do, in the most solemn manner, declare that we had every reason to believe our Rector sincere in his approval of the concert, and that he was not opposed to the employment of Miss Watson. It is well known to us, that only a few weeks before the concert, while on a visit to New York, he attended a concert at the Chatham Chapel, in which Mr. and Mrs. Wood, two of the most celebrated theatrical characters in the country, not only participated, but were the chief attraction; and that he highly extolled their performance, and expressed much gratification and delight at having been present on the occasion; and unless we have been misinformed, the proceeds of that concert were to be applied to no religious, benevolent, or charitable use. We do not give publicity to this fact for the purpose of criminating

the Rector. We mention it merely to show that we have ample proof to confirm our previous conviction, that he was not opposed to the employment of Miss Watson.

Could any facts or any evidence more strongly evince the Rector's sincerity in sanctioning and approving the arrangements which had been entered into, than those which have now been detailed? Our surprise may therefore well be imagined, when, on inquiry being made for Mr. Suddards by *a Clergyman who came to the Concert at his special invitation*, it was ascertained that he was not present. Not one of us, we do most conscientiously affirm, had the most distant idea that he intended to have absented himself. We had never heard such a thing intimated. Supposing, however, that sickness or some unexpected calamity might prevent his appearance, the Wardens immediately left the church and went to his residence, accompanied by the Clergyman just alluded to. They were there informed that he had gone to St. Andrew's Church, to attend a lecture to the Sunday School Teachers. The Wardens followed him to this place; and, as he was reading the service on their arrival, they could not have a personal interview with him; they consequently left a note in which he was informed that his attendance at Grace Church was respectfully desired. To this note a reply was received from the Rector about 10 o'clock the same evening, in which he says, "I cannot conscientiously attend the concert in our church under its present arrangement—of an actress from the stage taking a part therein." The reason here assigned for not attending the concert, utterly amazed and astounded us; for the "present arrangement," referred to, evidently applies to Miss Watson; and we have already stated that her engagement had received the *previous and unanimous consent of the Rector. Wardens and Vestry.*

Possessing the feelings and sensibilities common to

our nature, it was impossible for us to avoid being hurt and mortified at the course pursued by our Rector; and he was informed that such was the case; but this information did not cause him to offer any apology or explanation, or to make the slightest attempt, in any way, to sooth our wounded feelings. He will not deny that a member of his present Vestry, several days before the concert, informed him that Miss Watson was an actress. He will not deny that this same individual called on him, several days before the concert, and in order to convince him of the impropriety of permitting an actress from the stage taking a part therein, showed him the "Presbyterian," of the 17th December, containing a communication condemning this concert on this very ground. Then why did he not previously give us some intimation of his intention to absent himself? Why did he not previously inform us of his conscientious scruples? Why did he not consider it his duty to call the Vestry together and warn them of the impropriety of permitting an actress to take a part in the concert? Why did he sell tickets of admission to laymen and invite clergymen to a place, which he could not conscientiously attend? Why did he not, after he had changed his opinion as to the propriety of the concert, frankly tell us, that in his intercourse with his clerical brethren and with the religious community he found that "under is present arrangement" not to disapprove of it would be in effect to countenance a departure from those sound principles of religion and morality, which it was his duty to inculcate—in short, why did he not advise us to abandon an undertaking that was so exceedingly objectionable to him and might be injurious to ourselves? These questions, with some others, naturally presented themselves to our minds, but as they are not now the subjects of inquiry, we will not pursue them. For we have no desire to criminate the Rector, or censure his conduct in this unfortunate affair. Our only object, in presenting any facts which may have this tendency, is to satisfy the public that *we* do not deserve the blame that has been cast upon us. And we unhesitatingly affirm, that no such facts would have been brought forward, could we, in any

other way less objectionable, have vindicated ourselves from the odium to which a misapprehension of this affair has subjected us.

We may here remark, that on the night of the concert, we heard, for the first time, that it was currently reported that the Rector was opposed to the concert, and that it had been forced upon him by his Vestry. The gentleman, from whom this information was received procured his ticket from the Rector, and of course knew that the report was untrue; still, he was well aware, that if the Rector did not make his appearance, an apparent confirmation would be given to the report. The frank, manly, and christian spirit in which this gentleman manifested his interest in the matter, will ever endear him to our warmest affections.

Immediately after the concert and repeatedly since, we have heard it stated that the Vestry had invited all of the vocal and instrumental performers to a general rehearsal, which was to be held in the Church on Sunday, the 20th of December; and that it was with difficulty prevented by the Rector. This report, we doubt not, nay we are confident, is honestly believed by many well disposed persons. We will now state the facts which probably gave origin to this report. Two of our most eminent organists, in the kindest manner, tendered their services to perform a double voluntary on the organ, at the opening of the concert. And for the purpose of selecting a voluntary or overture that would be best adapted to the instrument, as well as to ascertain what combination of stops would give to the various parts of the composition the best effect, they made an appointment to meet at the Church, after evening service on the day just named; presuming that there could be no possible objection, on the part of the Vestry, to their using the organ for such a purpose. It must be born in mind, that this voluntary was exclusively for the organ; no other instruments nor any voices were to be engaged in its performance, then, or at the concert; nor were any of the other pieces, at that time, to be rehearsed. Before they had made a beginning, however, the Rector made his appearance, and rather uncourteously accosted some of the gentlemen of the Vestry,

who were present, on the impropriety of their permitting such a proceeding. Although we conceived that there could be no impropriety in performing a voluntary on the organ in the Church, during divine service or afterwards, on Sunday or on any other day; still the Rector was told by one of the Wardens that if he insisted on it, he would put a stop to it. He did insist on it, and the rehearsal of the voluntary was accordingly not permitted to take place. This trivial affair was soon, by whom we do not say, magnified into the serious charge mentioned in the commencement of this paragraph.

It only remains for us to say something respecting the card, which, in compliance with a custom usual on occasions of this kind, was published in several of the daily papers a day or two after the concert. The main design of this card was to return our thanks to the gentleman through whose indefatigable exertions and judicious superintendance the concert was got up, and to the vocal and instrumental performers generally, not excepting Miss Watson. It would indeed have been truly unmanly, had we, in consequence of the views of others, or on account of any unworthy personal considerations, been deterred from giving a public manifestation of our delight at the performance of the last named individual. We therefore did not hesitate to tender to her an expression of our thanks for her invaluable aid.

The Vestry likewise availed themselves of the publication of the card, to allude to the "illiberal opposition they encountered from a quarter altogether unexpected." This allusion was imagined, by many persons, to have been aimed at the Rector; which however was not the case. Had he opposed the concert, there might have been some reason for believing that it was intended for him. But he never did oppose it; on the contrary, he strongly advocated it, and as an evidence of this, he sold, presented, and distributed more tickets than *any member of the Vestry with a solitary exception.* It is perfectly idle, therefore, to suppose that we intended to accuse him of "illiberal opposition." Our allusion was entirely to that portion of the community, whose hostility was manifested in

the unnecessary interference of certain newspapers, and the exertions of several persons, some of whom belonged to our own and some to other churches.

The card also presented us with a suitable occasion of expressing our unfeigned and heartfelt gratification, at receiving the countenance and support of some of the most pious, exemplary, and talented of our clergy; and at the attendance of an auditory unusually large and respectable.

We have now presented to the public a candid statement of the facts connected with the concert. On these facts, we rest the justification of our conduct throughout the whole of that transaction. Be the decision of the public now, however, what it may, we can confidently look forward to a time, when our motives and actions will not be viewed through the medium of prejudice or excited feeling; then, if not before, will our conduct receive ample vindication.

We cannot conclude our remarks, without expressing our deep anxiety for the future welfare of a church, in the erection of which we have been so prominently and actively engaged. Our prayers and desires will ever ascend for its real and permanent prosperity. And though a portion of its present congregation has recently acted towards us in a way, that they themselves will, we doubt not, sooner or later deem unkind and unmerited; still we will do most of them the justice to believe that their motives were pure, and their intentions honest.

WM. ALMOND,
P. PENN GASKELL,
JOS. BISPHAM,
W. D. BRINCKLÉ,
J. MORRELL,
JAS. S. WOODWARD,
THOS. GILLESPIE,
WILLIAM BETHELL,
GEO. B. HALL.